

presently under consideration of the Ministry. The same are under scrutiny with respect to suitability of the items for production under industrial licence or otherwise.

(c) The defence industry sector was opened for Indian private sector participation in May, 2001 with the aim of building up indigenous defence industrial base and reducing dependence on defence imports.

Expansion of air fields

1597. SHRI MAHENDRA MOHAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether the Indian Air Force (IAF) has sent some proposals to the Ministry for expanding various airfields;

(b) if so, the details thereof;

(c) the current status of the Modernisation of Airfield Infrastructure (MAFI) project and progress so far; and

(d) the details of other infrastructure projects to upgrade facilities along the Sino-Indian border?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) Development and upgradation of certain airfields are planned to be taken up by the Indian Air Force (IAF) keeping in view the operational requirements and security/strategic needs of the country.

(c) The execution of Modernization of Airfield Infrastructure (MAFI) project has commenced in June, 2011.

(d) Development and upgradation of infrastructure facilities in the border areas of India are taken up based on the operational requirements of the defence forces and security/strategic needs of the country and are reviewed by the Government from time to time. This is a continuous process.

Objection to test firing of missiles from Andaman and Nicobar Islands

1598. SHRI A. ELAVARASAN: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether Indian Navy's plan to test fire missiles from Andaman and Nicobar Islands have hit a hurdle with the Ministry of Environment and Forests;

(b) whether the Environment Ministry's panel of experts states that the firing will impact the life cycle of Nicobar Megapode, an endangered ground bird found only in the ecologically sensitive area; and

(c) if so, the details thereof and the steps taken by Government in this regard?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) to (c) Indian Navy proposal for temporary use of Tillanchang Island for missile firings from submarines was discussed at the 23rd Meeting of Standing Committee of National Board of Wildlife (NBWL) on 14th October, 2011. The expert panel noted that the test firing was likely to have an impact on the life cycle of the Nicobar Megapode. A joint inspection by the expert and Chief Wildlife Warden, Andaman and Nicobar Islands has been ordered by the Standing Committee of National Board of Wildlife.

Firing ranges adjacent to human and wild life habitations

1599. SHRI BIRENDRA PRASAD BAISHYA: Will the Minister of DEFENCE be pleased to state:

(a) whether it is a fact that firing-range of the Indian Army has been established within or adjacent to Wild Life Sanctuaries, National Parks, Reserved Forests and places of human habitation in North Eastern States, which caused casualties during practices;

(b) if so, the details thereof; and

(c) the details of incidents occurred and the number of persons including wild animals who lost their lives during firing practice at these firing ranges as well as steps taken to prevent such incidents?

THE MINISTER OF DEFENCE (SHRI A.K. ANTONY): (a) and (b) Yes, Sir. Presently, there are three field firing ranges (FFRs) in the North Eastern States namely (i) Darranga (Assam); (ii) Leimakhong (Manipur) and Nara Tiding (Arunachal Pradesh). 4188 acres out of 4612 acres of Leimakhong range are situated in forest/village area. There are some human habitations outside the Nara Tiding range. Darranga range is not situated within or adjacent to any Wild Life Sanctuary, National Park, Reserved Forest or place of human habitation.

(c) There has been no report of any human or animal casualty at these field firing ranges. The following safety/precautionary measures/steps are already being taken to prevent such incidents:—

- (i) Clearance before firing is obtained from the civil Administration well in time.
- (ii) Local inhabitants are warned of firing by the local civil administration.
- (iii) Permanent notice boards are displayed to warn the public about firing. Red flags are also placed and sentries posted and the entry of civilian vehicles, personnel and animals is regulated along various roads/tracks leading to the ranges.
- (iv) Police representatives are also present during firing.
- (v) Clearance after firing is taken from the police, villages and civil administration.
- (vi) All unexplored ammunition is searched, collected and destroyed to prevent casualty to civilians and animals.